

APPLICATION
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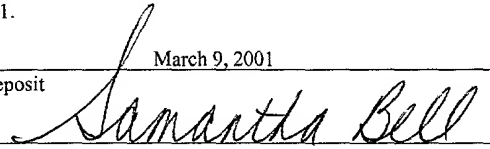
TITLE: HIGH-SPEED ROUTER
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Description

High-speed router

- 5 The invention relates to a high-speed router for transmitting data packets between data networks.

10 Data networks are used for interchanging data organized in the form of data packets. Identical types of data networks are connected to one another by so-called bridges, while different types of data networks require so-called coupling computers or gateways. In large data networks of the same type coupled to one another, the data paths are stipulated by so-called routers. A
15 router is a linking computer between two data networks. It forms part of the three bottommost layers in the OSI layer model and controls which path a data packet which is to be transmitted will take. Unlike bridges, routers have a dedicated MAC address, so that they behave
20 toward stations as though they themselves are communicating parties. Routers are networked with one another and regularly exchange information about configurations, line items, number of routers in the data path, error rates and bit rate capacity with one
25 another using a routing protocol. The routers exchange this information using particular protocols, with multiprotocol routers being standard today, that is to say routers which are able to process various protocols. The performance coefficient of a router is
30 the throughput of the router, which is indicated either in data packets/second or in bytes/second. In addition, the performance of a router depends on the processing time for a data packet and on the time between the data processing for two data packets. Both add up to form
35 the time spent by a data packet in the router.

Data packets comprise header data or a header, useful data (the so-called payload) and terminal data or a trailer. The header or the header data contains various

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administration data for the data packet, for example address, data packet number, transmitter identification, data packet status etc. The useful data contain the actual information which is to be
5 transmitted.

A conventional router permits the transmission of data between various fast Internet data networks, such as OC-12 or OC-48 interfaces. OC-12 has a data
10 transmission rate of 622 Mbits/second, and OC-48 has a data transmission rate of 2.5 Gbits/second. For bidirectional connections, an OC-48 interface results in a data throughput of 5.0 Gbits/second. These extremely high data transmission speeds place high
15 demands on the production of the data transmission routers.

Figure 1 shows the basic design of a conventional router based on the prior art. The router connects a
20 first local area data network LAN1 to a second local area network LAN2. The router is connected to the data networks by means of data processing blocks in the physical layer. The physical data processing blocks are used for setting up, maintaining and restoring physical
25 data connections, for coding/decoding, for synchronizing and regenerating the transmission clock and for the so-called smoothing functions. The physical data processing blocks PHY extract the data bits from the data stream arriving via the analog lines, or
30 output them to said analog lines. The physical data processing blocks PHY are respectively connected to a line card. A line card respectively contains an input/output port IO and a data forwarding circuit DW. The two line cards of the router are connected to a
35 switch or to a switching mechanism S.

Figure 2 shows a data path within a line card of a conventional router based on the prior art. The applied

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data packet is routed through the entire data path. First, the data packet enters an input buffer, in which it is buffer-stored. Header data processing, the data processing of the data contained in the header of the data packet, then takes place. The data packet is forwarded and switched and finally enters an output buffer. So-called scheduling then takes place in a scheduler in a further step. The isolated data processing units, i.e. the header data distribution unit, the forwarding circuit and the scheduler need to operate quickly enough to prevent the buffer memory from overflowing. These units are therefore conventionally implemented in the form of application specific integrated circuits, so-called ASICs.

The Internet is distinguished by a high level of growth and flexibility. In particular, Internet services like security, quality of service QOS and traffic engineering are subject to various configurations and modifications. Conventional routers, whose processing units are implemented in the form of ASICs, have the disadvantage that they are inflexible for configuration changes, since their hardware is stipulated. Routers have therefore been proposed which are programmable and contain processors. Since the data processing speed of an individual processor cannot keep up with the transmission speed of normal data transmission networks, multiprocessor routers having a plurality of processors and a pipeline architecture have been proposed.

Figure 3 shows such a conventional multiprocessor router with pipeline architecture based on the prior art. In this case, the router contains a plurality of processors P1-P4, each assigned specific tasks. In this context, by way of example, the three series-connected processors P1-P3 perform various data processing tasks

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for header data, and the processor P4 performs the scheduling.

Although such multiprocessor routers result in an
5 increase in the data processing speed, they have the
disadvantage that various different processors P1-P4
need to be programmed for the different tasks.
Furthermore, testing such conventional multiprocessor
routers becomes much more difficult on account of the
10 use of processors programmed in various different ways.

It is therefore the object of the present invention to provide a high-speed router which is easy to program and to test and at the same time permits a very high data transmission speed.

This object is achieved by a high-speed router having the features specified in patent claim 1.

20 The invention provides a high-speed router for transmitting data packets, containing header and useful data, between data networks, the router having a plurality of data processing processors for parallel data processing of the header data.

25 The high-speed router preferably has a demultiplexer
for separating the data packets which are present into
header data and useful data.

30 Preferably, a distribution processor is provided for distributing the separated header data to the various data processing processors.

35 The distribution processor distributes the header data preferably on the basis of the priority of the header data and the workload of the data processing processors.

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In this context, the header data are distributed to the data processing processors preferably by means of a DMA operation.

- 5 In another preferred embodiment, a CAM coprocessor having an associative memory is provided for classifying the data packets.

- 10 Preferably, a useful data memory is also provided for buffer-storing the separated useful data.

In this context, the header data and useful data in a data packet preferably contain a respective identifier.

- 15 In addition, a first multiplexer is preferably provided for compiling the processed header data and the useful data, the useful data coming from the useful data memory or from a switching mechanism.

- 20 In addition, a second multiplexer is preferably provided for compiling the useful data buffer-stored in useful data memory and the processed header data.

- 25 In one preferred embodiment of the high-speed router according to the invention, the first multiplexer has a FIFO memory connected downstream of it for outputting the compiled data packets through the router.

- 30 The output of the second multiplexer is preferably connected to the switching mechanism.

- 35 In one particularly preferred embodiment, the distribution processor, data processing processors and the CAM coprocessor are connected to a common header data bus.

Each data processing processor preferably has a dedicated local memory.

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In addition, a common global memory is preferably connected to the header data bus.

In one particularly preferred embodiment, the CAM
5 coprocessor is connected to the header data bus via
FIFO buffer memories.

The demultiplexer preferably has an input buffer
connected upstream of it.

10 In this context, the data networks are preferably LAN
networks or the Internet.

The distribution processor and the data processing
15 processors are preferably of the same processor type.

A preferred embodiment of the high-speed router
according to the invention is described below with
reference to the appended figures in order to explain
20 features which are fundamental to the invention.

In the figures:

25 Figure 1 shows the basic design of a conventional
router based on the prior art;

Figure 2 shows a data path within a line card based on
the prior art;

30 Figure 3 shows a multiprocessor router with pipeline
architecture based on the prior art;

Figure 4 shows a preferred embodiment of the
high-speed router according to the invention.

35 Figure 4 shows the design of a preferred embodiment of
the high-speed router 1 according to the invention. The
high-speed router 1 has a data input connection 2 via

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which the router 1 receives data packets serially. The data packets contain a header or header data and also a payload or useful data. The data packets enter an input buffer 4, via a line 3, for buffer-storing the incoming data packets. From the input buffer 4, the data packets are routed via a line 5 to a demultiplexer 6, which separates the header data from the useful data. The header data are switched onto a header data bus 7 by the demultiplexer 6, while the useful data are written to a useful data memory 9 by the demultiplexer 6 via a line 8. The useful data memory 9 is preferably a RAM memory.

Connected to the header data bus 7 is a distribution processor 10 having a DMA device 11. The distribution processor 10 is used for distributing the header data present on the header data bus 7 to various data processing processors 12, 13, 14, 15 arranged in parallel. The data processing processors 12, 13, 14, 15 are preferably of the same processor type and each have a dedicated local memory 16, 17, 18, 19. In this case, the local memories are preferably RAM memories. The incoming header data are distributed to the various data processing processors 12, 13, 14, 15 by means of DMA operation. The distribution processor 10 distributes the header data on the basis of the priority of the header data and the workload of the data processing processors 12, 13, 14, 15.

In addition, a common memory 20 which can be accessed by all the data processing processors 12, 13, 14, 15 is provided on the header data bus 7. Furthermore, the router 1 according to the invention contains a CAM coprocessor 21 having an associative memory or a CAM memory. The CAM coprocessor is used for classifying the data packets. In this case, the CAM coprocessor is connected via FIFO memories 22, 23 to the header data bus 7 in order to smooth the flow of data.

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In addition, the router 1 according to the invention contains a first multiplexer 24 for compiling the header data present on the header data bus 7 and the associated useful data buffer-stored in the useful data memory 9. To this end, the header data and useful data of an incoming data packet have an identifier or identification ID indicating to which data packet they belong. The first multiplexer 24 is connected to the useful data memory 9 via a line 25 and to the header data bus 7 via a line 26. In addition, the multiplexer is connected to a switching mechanism or switch fabric via a line 27. The output of the first multiplexer 24 is connected via a line 28 to a FIFO output memory 29, which is used for outputting the compiled data packets via a line 30 and an output connection 31 of the router 1.

In addition, the router 1 contains a second multiplexer 32, whose input is connected via lines 25 to the useful data memory 9 and to the header data bus 7. The output of the second multiplexer 32 is connected to the switching mechanism via a line 33.

The inventive high-speed router 1 shown in figure 4 permits the data transmission of data packets at a very high data transmission speed, the various processors being able to be of the same processor type on account of the parallel architectures, and the same software tools being able to be used for the various processors. Each incoming data packet is treated as a stateless data unit, with just the header data being processed by the router 1.

One advantage of the router architecture shown in figure 4 is that output buffering becomes superfluous. Only the header data are buffered both at the input and at the output. In this context, the header data are

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buffer-stored at the input until classification has ended and a decision has been made regarding the destination to which the header data and the associated useful data need to be forwarded. The output port is
5 responsible for the scheduling and indicates to what location and when a data packet is written to the output FIFO buffer for data transmission. The control information can be transmitted by means of the switching mechanism or the switch fabric.

10

The router architecture shown in figure 4 can be used for various types of routers and switches, in particular for so-called edge routers, core routers, server routers and ATM switches.

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The parallel arrangement of a plurality of processors on the common header data bus 7 means that the high-speed router 1 according to the invention achieves an extremely high data transmission speed while at the
20 same time being easy to program and test.

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